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Report of the Government Consultation on

CODES OF PRACTICE FOR FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

Rome, 24-26 September 1974

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ROME, 1974

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PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

This is the report of the Government Consultation (previously known as Ad hoc Consultation) on Codes of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products, convened in Rome from 24 to 26 September 1974 by the Fish Production and Marketing Service of the Fishery Industries Division in order to obtain expert advice on the elaboration of codes of practice. The previous five meetings of the Consultation were held in 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971 and 1973.

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REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON CODES OF PRACTICE FOR FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

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Introduction

1. The Government Consultation on Codes of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products was convened in Rome by the Department of Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from 24 to 26 September 1974.

The meeting was held to consider two draft codes of practice, namely, the Draft Code of Practice for Lobsters and Crawfish and the Draft Code of Practice for Salted Fish.

In addition, two background papers on minced fish and on dried fish, and a proposal for a background paper on fish marketing were submitted to the Consultation in order to advise FAO whether relevant codes of practice should be elaborated in the future.

2. The following countries were represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Nigeria, U.K. and the U.S.A. (See Appendix.)

3. The meeting elected Mr. J.B. Donnelly of Australia as its Chairman and Mr. D.G. James (Australia) as Rapporteur.

4. The Director of the Fishery Industries Division, FAO Department of Fisheries, opened the session by welcoming the participants on behalf of the Director-General of FAO and the Assistant Director-General (Fisheries). In his opening remarks he emphasized the importance attached by FAO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission to the development of codes of practice for fish and fishery products.

It has been recognized that these codes are, firstly, extremely useful in assisting the production of high quality fish and shellfish products and in reducing wastage of potentially good food; secondly, they are very helpful in meeting the food standards of importing countries and the international standards such as those being developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products; and thirdly, they are valuable to governments and industry of the developing countries for training, education and as background documents for the development of national fish inspection and quality control programmes. The Department of Fisheries had therefore done its utmost to continue to elaborate further codes by allocating additional funds for this work and intended to keep up this effort also in the forthcoming biennium. Furthermore, considerable effort will have to be made in the distribution and implementation of the codes among the developing countries. To achieve this, the Department intended to put new emphasis on training programmes in fish handling, processing and distribution, as well as in fish inspection and quality control, and it hoped to enlist the assistance of developed countries in this field. The Department would also utilize all possibilities to establish new field projects in these areas and do anything possible in order to bring the codes into the hands of fishermen, industry and government officials of the developing countries.

Agenda

5. The substantive agenda of the Government Consultation was approved as follows:

(a) Report on progress and current status of codes of practice
(b) Consideration of Draft Code of Practice for Lobsters and Crawfish
(c) Discussion of the Background Paper on Minced Fish
(d) Consideration of Draft Code of Practice for Salted Fish
(e) Discussion of the Background Paper on Dried Fish
(f) Discussion of the proposal for a background paper on fish marketing
(g) Review of future work on codes of practice and consideration of priorities

Report on Progress and Current Status of Codes of Practice

6. The Secretariat reported that in 1973 the Code of Practice for Fresh Fish and the Code of Practice for Canned Fishery Products were redrafted to incorporate the hygienic provisions, translated into Spanish and French and submitted as draft codes to the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products. They were also published as FAO Fisheries Circulars.

In 1974, the following codes have been completed: The Code of Practice for Frozen Fish (published as an FAO Fisheries Circular), the Code of Practice for Shrimps and Prawns, and the Code of Practice for Smoked Fish. The latter two have not, as yet, been translated and, therefore, are not available for general distribution. The Code of Practice for Frozen Fish has been submitted to the next session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products.

Consideration of the Draft Code of Practice for Lobsters and Crawfish

7. The draft code was reviewed in considerable detail. A number of substantive changes were made, including the change of title to Draft Code of Practice for Lobsters and Related Species.

The revised draft will be finalized by the Secretariat and circulated. In the light of comments received, FAO would decide whether to submit it to the 1975 meeting of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products or whether further work on the code is necessary.

Discussion of the Background Paper on Minced Fish

8. The Background Paper on Minced Fish, prepared by the FAO consultant as a result of recommendations made at the 1973 Ad hoc Consultation and at the Technical Conference on Fishery Products, Tokyo, December 1973, was reviewed in detail as to the advisability of drawing up a code. The consensus of the meeting was that it would be difficult to prepare a code covering fully all types of minced fish products. However, it was agreed that it should be possible to elaborate a code of practice dealing with the handling of fish or any raw fish material for mincing, production of minced fish flesh and the preparation of products such as minced fish blocks. The meeting recommended to FAO that such a draft code be prepared.

Consideration of the Draft Code of Practice for Salted Fish

9. The group considered in detail a document prepared by the FAO consultant. Discussions on the document centred on whether a future code of practice for salted fish should also include considerations relating to dried fish and practices relevant to tropical regions. It was felt that it might be advisable for FAO to circulate this draft to experts on tropical fish technology for comments and to resubmit it to the 1975 Government Consultation. The meeting was of the opinion that in 1975 the question of incorporating into the Code of Practice for Salted Fish the technological and hygienic practices of the dried fish industry should be considered in detail.

Discussion of the Background Paper on Dried Fish

10. The background paper was prepared for FAO by the Torry Research Station, U.K. During the discussions it was stated that the code which might be elaborated based on this paper should also consider sun-drying and operation of simple kilns, or other methods not requiring electric power. The participants had an extensive discussion on the question of whether or not a code for handling tropical species should be developed before preparation of a code for dried fish. The Consultation was advised that during the next year FAO hopes to have an expert available for an in-depth study of tropical fish technology. The Secretariat concurred that it would be possible and preferable to elaborate a background paper rather than a code on tropical fish technology and agreed to have such a paper prepared. This activity would also be in keeping with the recommendations of the Technical Conference on Fishery Products held in Tokyo in December 1973. The elaboration of a code on dried fish could then be reconsidered at the next meeting.

Discussion of the Proposal for the Background Paper on Fish Marketing

11. After discussing the proposal, it was decided to limit consideration to highly perishable fish and fishery products and to the handling of fish at the retail level only. It was also suggested that the background paper should incorporate information on delivery to the retail stores and other sales points. The Consultation felt that the ultimate scope of the background paper should be determined by the expert. It was agreed that should the expert consider it advisable, information relating to catering, restaurant and institutional trade, could be incorporated.

Review of future work on codes of practice and consideration of priorities

12. The meeting made the following recommendations which are set out in order of priority:

(a) An attempt should be made to produce a draft code of practice for minced fish blocks encompassing the widest possible technological spectrum. The consultant or consultants should approach countries which have technological information available in order to ensure that their coverage is adequate.

(b) A background paper should be prepared on the handling and preservation of tropical fish. The scope of the exercise will depend upon the information and expertise available and was therefore left to the Secretariat.

(c) A background paper on fish marketing should be completed for consideration by the next Government Consultation.

(d) FAO should revise the background paper on dried fish and have it made available for general distribution as an FAO Fisheries Technical Paper.

With regard to work scheduled for the 1976/77 biennium, the Consultation suggested that the elaboration of codes of practice for tropical fish and a code of practice or a guideline on retail marketing of fish and fishery products should be considered.

The elaboration of a code on molluscan shellfish was deferred for the moment so that the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene could complete its work in this field.

The Secretariat was asked to provide information on the importance of semi-preserved and fermented fish in selected markets and in international trade to assist the next consultation in reaching agreement on priority to be accorded this work.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Government Consultation on Codes of Practice
for Fish and Fishery Products

Rome, 24-26 September 1974

Australia

Mr. J. Donnelly
Principal Executive Officer
Department of Agriculture
Canberra

Mr. D. James
Fish Technologist
CSIRO
Stowell Avenue
Hobart 7000
Tasmania

Canada

Dr. C.M. Blackwood
Director, Inspection Branch
Fisheries and Marine Service
Department of the Environment
Ottawa K1A OH3
Ontario

Mr. W.A. Murphy
Chief, Inspection District
P.O. Box 1236
Charlottetown
P.E.I.

Mr. J.P. Hennessey
Chief, Inspection Branch
Newfoundland Region
Fisheries Service
Department of the Environment
Building 303
Pleasantville, St. John's
Newfoundland

Denmark

Mr. P.F. Jensen
Director, Inspection Service
for Fish Products
Ministry of Fisheries
Dr. Tvaergade 21
DK-1302 Copenhagen K.

Mr. L. Herborg
Acting Director
Technological Laboratory
Ministry of Fisheries
Building 221
Technical University
2800 Lyngby

Federal Republic of Germany

Mr. H. Hesse
Diplom-Volkswirt
Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture
and Forestry
5300 Bonn

Mr. E. Ruckes
Economist
D 1000 Berlin 33
Krampasplatz 4a

France

Miss F. Soudan
Chef, Service de la Technologie et
des Contrôles
Institut scientifique et technique
des Pêches maritimes
Rue de l'ile d'Yeu
44 Nantes.

Japan

Mr. T. Imai
Technical Official
Fishery Marketing Division
Fishery Agency
Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo

Mr. M. Nonaka
Taiyo Fishery Co. Limited
Northern Sea Fishery Division
1-5-1, Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100

The Netherlands

Dr. J.J. Doesburg
Institute for Fishery Products
TNO
Dokweg 37
Postbus 183
IJmuiden

Mr. D. Tielenius
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
1° V.d. Boschstraat 4
The Hague

Norway

Mr. T. Kvande-Pettersen
Manager
Industrilaboratoriet A-S
Kristiansund N.

Nigeria

Mr. S.O. Talabi
Head, Technology Research Branch
Federal Department of Fisheries
PMB 12529
Lagos

U.K.

Dr. G.H.O. Burgess
Director, Torry Research Station
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
P.O. Box 31
Aberdeen AB9 8DG
Scotland

U.S.A.

Mr. J.R. Brooker
Chief, Fishery Products Inspection and Safety Division
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Washington, D.C. 20235

Mr. D. Whitaker
Economist
National Marine Fisheries Service
Building No. 2
Washington, D.C. 20235

FAO

Mr. H. Watzinger
Director
Fishery Industries Division

Mr. W. de Haas
Liaison Officer
FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Food Policy and Nutrition Division

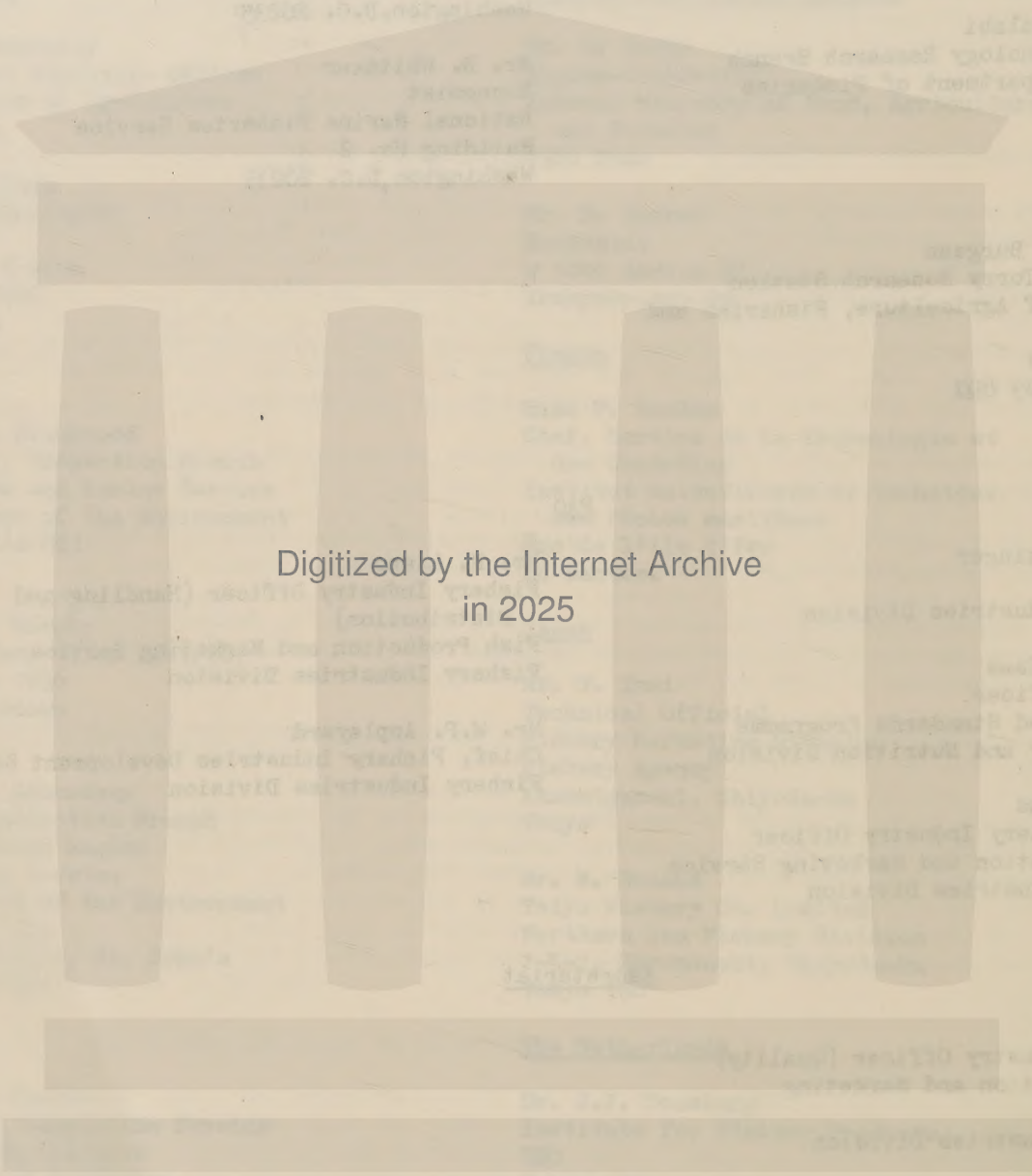
Dr. W. Krone
Senior Fishery Industry Officer
Fish Production and Marketing Service
Fishery Industries Division

Mr. H. Lisac
Fishery Industry Officer (Handling and Distribution)
Fish Production and Marketing Service
Fishery Industries Division

Mr. W.P. Appleyard
Chief, Fishery Industries Development Service
Fishery Industries Division

Secretariat

Mr. R. Garm
Fishery Industry Officer (Quality)
Fish Production and Marketing Service
Fishery Industries Division



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